



OPEN ACCESS

EDITED BY

Hatice Simten Cosar,
University of Pittsburgh, United States

REVIEWED BY

Elif Sabahat Uyar,
Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University, Türkiye
Muhammad Danish Habib,
Air University, Pakistan

*CORRESPONDENCE

Claudia Giacomani
✉ cgiacoma@uc.cl

RECEIVED 08 August 2024

ACCEPTED 03 September 2025

PUBLISHED 30 September 2025

CITATION

Torres R, Joustra C, Figueroa J and
Giacomani C (2025) Social change as a
lifestyle: identifying actions and practices of
vegan activism among young adults.
Front. Polit. Sci. 7:1477573.
doi: 10.3389/fpos.2025.1477573

COPYRIGHT

© 2025 Torres, Joustra, Figueroa and
Giacomani. This is an open-access article
distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License \(CC BY\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). The
use, distribution or reproduction in other
forums is permitted, provided the original
author(s) and the copyright owner(s) are
credited and that the original publication in
this journal is cited, in accordance with
accepted academic practice. No use,
distribution or reproduction is permitted
which does not comply with these terms.

Social change as a lifestyle: identifying actions and practices of vegan activism among young adults

Rodrigo Torres¹, Camila Joustra², Juan Figueroa^{2,3} and
Claudia Giacomani^{3*}

¹Centro de Investigación en Ciencias Sociales y Juventud (CISJU), Universidad Católica Silva
Henríquez, Santiago, Chile, ²Independent Researcher, Santiago, Chile, ³Instituto de Sociología,
Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Santiago, Chile

While classical models of social-movement research focus on protests and collective events, recent work has shifted toward an individualized approach to collective action within political participation and activism. Drawing on 73 in-depth qualitative interviews with 40 young vegans in Santiago, Chile, we examine how participants themselves define and enact vegan activism in everyday life. Our results reveal that veganism transcends dietary choice, encompassing professional engagement, online content creation, and even cooking and commensality as deliberate activist practices. These lifestyle-based practices coexist with organized collective actions—like marches and NGO initiatives—to forge a hybrid model of political participation blending individual agency and collective coordination. By integrating these findings into existing theories of lifestyle political activism, we offer a more nuanced framework for understanding political participation. First, we reconceptualize vegan activism as simultaneously a lifestyle movement and a social movement. Second, we introduce a typology that classifies activist actions and practices along the axes of individual versus collective action and interpersonal versus public impact. Third, we uncover underexplored domains—culinary-based actions and professional engagement—that extend current theories of everyday political activism. These findings not only advance theory but also offer practical insights for vegan and environmental activists—such as food-based interventions and digital outreach strategies—to enhance the impact and reach of their practices. By foregrounding activists' own definitions and experiences in a Global South context, this study demonstrates the value of situated analyses for reconceptualizing political participation and broadening core theoretical frameworks.

KEYWORDS

veganism, animal rights, environment, social movements, activism, youth, political participation, Chile

1 Introduction

In an era of escalating environmental crises and growing concern for animal welfare, vegan activism has emerged as a salient form of everyday political engagement. As [Judge et al. \(2022, p. 2\)](#) define it, vegan activism comprises the “behaviours that are performed by individuals with an underlying collective social change orientation to promote the spread of vegan lifestyle in wider society.” This demonstrates how everyday practices both reflect and advance broader movement goals ([Véron, 2025](#); [Spang, 2025](#)). This form of activism exemplifies a lifestyle movement, described by [Haenfler et al. \(2012, p. 2\)](#) as one in which people “consciously and

actively promote a lifestyle, or a way of life, as their primary means to foster social change,” typically exhibiting three key features: (i) adopting this lifestyle as a deliberate tactic for social change, (ii) centering personal identity work, and (iii) organizing in diffuse yet morally coherent networks. This individualized form of activism both complements and challenges classic approaches to political participation in social movements (Císař, 2015). Traditional frameworks—contentious politics, resource mobilization theories, and demobilization processes—portray activism as extraordinary events in public spaces or through macropolitical interventions (Tilly and Tarrow, 2015; Della Porta and Diani, 2020; Neveu, 2019; Véron, 2016). By contrast, lifestyle movements redirect focus from macropolitical demonstrations to everyday practices (Moor, 2017; Moor and Verhaegen, 2020; Yates, 2022).

Within this broader understanding of lifestyle movements, veganism exemplifies how personal choices intersect with political engagement. From this perspective, veganism is not merely a matter of consumption or identity, but an entry point to reconceptualizing the scope of social movement theory and its relation to political life (Moor, 2017; Gheihman, 2021). Everyday practices—such as personal consumption decisions, identity work, or digital content creation—contribute to collective efforts against animal exploitation and environmental degradation by embedding activism in daily life and treating it as an individualized form of collective action (Gheihman, 2021; Judge et al., 2022). In doing so, vegan activism illustrates how the political can be enacted in embedded, routine spaces, thus expanding the boundaries of how politics and participation are conceptualized (Kalte, 2021; Yates, 2022; Lorenzini and Forno, 2022). By situating veganism within this broader tradition, we argue that vegan activism offers insights into classic debates in social movement theory, such as the balance between contentious and everyday politics, the relation between identity work and collective mobilization, and the capacity of everyday practices to generate macrosocial change (Bertuzzi, 2017; Fernandes-Jesus et al., 2018). Ultimately, this study highlights vegan activism as a case for exploring the micro-foundations of collective action and the possibilities of expanding democratic practices beyond conventional arenas (Moor, 2017; Moor and Verhaegen, 2020).

Building on this theoretical foundation, research on lifestyle movements has explored diverse causes and struggles, ranging from cultural issues, such as urban movements associated with electronic music (Riley et al., 2010), to religious concerns, exemplified by skeptics or atheist activists (Simmons, 2018). The environmental theme is one of the most studied areas from this perspective, with studies on movements promoting reduced carbon emissions, urban food cultivation, and zero-waste lifestyles (Büchs et al., 2015; Dobernic and Stagl, 2015; Spiteri, 2021). In this line of work, there is significant research on veganism as a lifestyle movement (Cherry, 2015; Giraud, 2021; Turgay, 2020; Gheihman, 2021). It is important to note that veganism has traditionally been linked with a dietary regimen based on the exclusion of animal products, adopted for ethical, health, or religious reasons (Wright, 2021; Gheihman, 2021). However, as some authors emphasize, veganism has progressively been recognized as a political philosophy, aiming not only to combat cruelty and human exploitation towards animals but also to address environmental damage resulting from the animal industry (Giraud, 2021; Giroux and Larue, 2019; Radnitz et al., 2015; Kalte, 2021).

This perspective has inspired public interest in the movement and encouraged research examining how vegans’ political practices and perspectives operate as mechanisms for influencing social change (Vestergren and Uysal, 2022). In this line, Kalte (2021), through a specially designed survey conducted in Switzerland in 2018, explores veganism as a potential form of unconventional political participation. The study shows that the most important reason for adopting a vegan lifestyle is the desire to avoid animal suffering, followed by concerns for environmental protection and the reduction of global hunger. Judge et al. (2022), using a survey with self-identified vegans from Australia, the UK, and the USA, found that individuals were more likely to engage in vegan activism when they expressed stronger moral convictions, greater collective efficacy, and stronger identification, both with other vegans and with animals. From a conceptual standpoint, Spang (2025) advances the notion of deliberative activism within veganism. She argues that vegan activists operate not only through formal organizations but also via informal and formal deliberative exchanges—such as street interactions, public talks, and institutional settings—where moral reasoning, audience framing, and dialogue around animal ethics are central. This framework enriches understandings of vegan activism by emphasizing its discursive and dialogical dimensions, situating it within the realm of everyday politics beyond traditional protest or consumption-based approaches. Similarly, Véron (2025), through a spatial analysis in France and Germany, proposes that the everyday political practices of vegan activists can be understood as everyday spaces of social change, highlighting how routine actions and spatial practices are embedded in broader processes of transformation.

Despite growing interest in the political dimensions of veganism, and although the literature has expanded both conceptually and empirically, two significant gaps remain. Conceptually, the literature tends to overemphasize ethical consumption—particularly individual dietary choices—while overlooking the political diversity and complexity of everyday activism and its connections to broader individual and collective actions (Handayani et al., 2025; Herman and O’Neill, 2025). Moreover, few studies explore how individual vegan habits translate into wider social change (Vestergren and Uysal, 2022), which detaches vegan activism from its capacity to influence both personal agency and collective coordination across diverse social spheres. Empirically, most existing research relies on survey-based methods conducted in Europe or North America, limiting our understanding of how vegan activism unfolds in underrepresented contexts. Research is overwhelmingly centered on developed countries and adopts deductive, survey-based approaches that leave Global South contexts underexplored (Vestergren and Uysal, 2022; Thomas et al., 2019; Bertuzzi, 2017; Díaz Carmona, 2012). Few studies emerge from activists’ own self-definitions and lived experiences, resulting in limited evidence grounded in vegan activist perspectives. As a result, we know very little about how young activists define their practices and identities as everyday forms of political participation, or how veganism is politically mobilized in developing country contexts such as Latin America.

To address these gaps in the literature, this study investigates how young vegan adults in Santiago, Chile, conceptualize activism and the range of activities they see as part of it. By avoiding defining activism *a priori* and empirically exploring the views of young Chilean vegans, this study helps expand our understanding of what counts as activism. The study’s focus on a Latin American urban setting offers an

opportunity to decenter dominant knowledge production in vegan activism research. In sum, this study seeks to answer the following questions: How do vegans conceptualize activism? What individual and collective practices of activism characterize vegans? And what innovative practices emerge when social change intersects with everyday struggles? By exploring these questions, the study aims to uncover the boundaries of activism as perceived by Chilean vegans. It also examines the actions they consider activist and the reasons behind these perceptions.

Through the analysis of 73 biographical interviews conducted with 40 vegans, the findings suggest that vegan activism, as a lifestyle movement, is not confined solely to food consumption practices. Our findings reveal that vegans perceive many aspects of their everyday lives as activism. As a category-of-praxis, constructed from below, activism is revealed as a rather flexible, sometimes contested, and very broad category. It includes the creation and distribution of content on social media (including information and content that generates empathy towards animals, and even recipes), professional engagement (e.g., when vegan entrepreneurs open vegan businesses to make vegan alternatives more accessible, or when vegan health professionals use their professional knowledge and position of professional authority to promote veganism), and even sharing a meal with coworkers. These practices, alongside traditional forms of activism like legal advocacy and political marches, expand the boundaries of what is typically considered activism. This aligns with and extends the theories of lifestyle movements, highlighting the role of everyday actions in fostering social change (Haenfler et al., 2012; Yates, 2022; Moor, 2017).

Focusing on the practices of vegan activists, this study extends our understanding of lifestyle movements as forms of political participation by examining how everyday actions translate into collective and macrosocial change (Moor, 2017; Moor and Verhaegen, 2020; Gheihman, 2021). First, it emphasizes actions that are defined as activism by the activists themselves, highlighting how their daily practices and activities are oriented toward social change. Second, by addressing vegan activist practices not only at an individual level but also in their articulation across meso and macrosocial levels (Fernandes-Jesus et al., 2018), the research reveals the flexibility and breadth of the concept of activism. Third, the study contributes by offering a typology of vegan activist practices, organized by individual and collective levels and by their orientation toward either interpersonal or broader public impact. This analytical framework highlights how actions—ranging from ethical consumption and commensality to marches and professional engagement—are perceived by activists as politically meaningful across diverse arenas of everyday life. The findings demonstrate how new theories of change expand the boundaries of the social category of “activism,” providing a nuanced understanding of the vegan movement as both a lifestyle movement and a social movement (Cherry, 2015, 2021; Gheihman, 2021; Judge et al., 2022; Vestergren and Uysal, 2022).

In summary, considering the gaps identified in previous work, our findings contribute to the study of political participation and lifestyle social movements in two key ways. First, the study offers an empirically grounded account of how vegan activism is understood and enacted in a Latin American context, a region where lifestyle movements have been rarely examined. Second, by adopting a qualitative, abductive approach centered on activists’ own definitions and lived experiences, this research shifts the analytical emphasis away from predefined categories of activism toward a more situated and

nuanced understanding of these political practices. While existing studies have primarily focused on veganism as a form of ethical consumption, our work addresses the lack of typologies that systematize vegan activist practices across individual and collective levels, as well as according to their orientation toward interpersonal or broader social-public impacts. In doing so, the study advances a theoretically relevant concept within political scholarship by reflecting the pragmatic use of “activism” in everyday life and highlighting how lifestyle movements contribute to broader debates about democratic participation and the politicization of daily practices. These findings not only advance theory but also offer practical insights for activists, advocacy organizations, and policymakers—such as workplace advocacy, culinary outreach, and digital campaigning—that can help leverage everyday practices to promote environmental and animal-welfare objectives.

2 Materials and methods

2.1 Design and instruments

This study is part of a four-year research project involving 73 interviews with 40 young vegans over 3 years about the process to becoming vegan in Santiago, Chile. The focus of the study was not activism per se, but rather the process of adopting and sustaining a vegan lifestyle. Activism emerged as a topic spontaneously during the early stages of the research (year 1), and was subsequently explored in more depth in the later stages (year 2 and 3). As the aim was to describe the trajectories of vegans, a qualitative, biographical approach was deemed appropriate (Cornejo, 2006; Bertaux, 2011). The main findings of this research have already been published (Giacoman et al., 2021).

The research team developed the interview protocol collaboratively, based on the project’s overarching aim of understanding the trajectories of individuals who adopted and maintained a vegan lifestyle. It was designed as a flexible, biographical thematic guide, allowing in-depth exploration while adapting to each participant’s unique experience.

The first year’s interview focused on participants’ life histories, particularly their motivations for becoming vegan, the transition process, and key biographical milestones. In the second year, the protocol was refined to incorporate themes that emerged particularly relevant during the initial interviews. This included a more detailed exploration of everyday practices, such as food preparation and consumption, health-related habits, shopping routines, and different forms of activism linked to veganism. In the third year, the interviews followed the same format, with questions tailored to revisit earlier themes, explore changes over time, and further elaborate on issues that had remained underdeveloped. Each year, the interview protocol was approved by the ethics committee of the author’s institution.

Trained research team members conducted all interviews to ensure their quality and comparability. For the first and second year, interviews were conducted online as Chile was under lockdown measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the last year, interviews were both online and face-to-face. The participants chose the settings for comfort and privacy. Interviews lasted, on average, 1 hour, though some were extended beyond that, depending on the depth of the conversation. Before each interview, participants were informed about

the study's objectives, received a written informed consent form, and only after signing it was the interview scheduled. Ethical procedures were followed throughout by institutional guidelines.

The longitudinal design of biographical interviews over 3 years allows us to build trust with participants and observe their narratives' consistencies, changes, and developments. This and the triangulation between the cases helped us cross-check information within and across interviews, increasing the robustness of the interpretations.

2.2 Participants

The participants' ages range from 19 to 35, given that young adults are the primary followers of this lifestyle (Larsson et al., 2003). In terms of gender distribution, nine of the interviewees are men, 30 are women, and one identifies as non-binary. This aligns with the literature on the subject, emphasizing a strong female presence in these types of movements (Díaz Carmona, 2012; Kalte, 2021; Ruby, 2012).

The first data collection period took place in June 2020. Initially, a public call was made through social media for individuals interested in being interviewed, resulting in a total of 30 participants in this first stage. The second stage occurred in September 2021, where 15 vegans from the previous phase were interviewed, and 10 new interviewees were recruited through a second call on social media. The third stage was in August 2022, where 18 of the 25 participants from the second stage continued their involvement in the research.

To ensure the inclusion of diverse profiles within the sample, two selection criteria were employed. Firstly, we classified participants by duration of vegan practice: those with under 1 year were designated "novice" vegans and those with over 1 year "established" vegans. Secondly, selection was made according to the participants' social class based on their parents' occupation (Goldthorpe and McKnight, 2004). To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were used throughout the study to protect the participants' identities.

2.3 Analytic strategy

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim in their original language. Research team members read the transcripts multiple times to develop an in-depth understanding of each case. This initial phase of familiarization, conducted before intensive analysis, was crucial for registering early analytical impressions that would inform the subsequent coding process (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).

As noted, this article forms part of a larger research project on becoming vegan. Thematic analysis was carried out across the three waves of fieldwork, following the guidelines proposed by Graham Gibbs (2007). First, open coding was applied in each wave to identify themes emerging spontaneously from participants' interviews. Second, these initial codes were then grouped into broader categories and themes, forming a code tree specific to each fieldwork phase. This process enabled us to capture the full range of topics addressed by participants, among which activism figured as a relevant issue.

The research team collaboratively discussed and refined the open codes and their subsequent thematic groupings in a series of analytical

meetings. This collective and reflexive process allowed for interrogating interpretations, identifying shared and divergent patterns, and developing robust and valid thematic structures (Gibbs, 2007).

Although only the second-year interview guide included an explicit question about vegan activism, activism-related topics emerged spontaneously across all three waves of fieldwork, particularly regarding participants' ways of promoting veganism and their involvement in organizations. For this article, we analyzed all the material relating to activism mentioned by participants throughout the interviews. Drawing on the thematic analysis results, we identified key categories associated with everyday activist practices and collective forms of activism.

The research team worked abductively with the empirical material to construct the final themes while considering relevant literature and the study's conceptual framework. Careful attention was given to shared patterns and individual participant account variations. Throughout the process, analytical rigor was ensured through cross-case triangulation and regular peer debriefing sessions, which allowed for critical reflection and the minimization of researcher bias. The coding and data management were supported by the qualitative analysis software MAXQDA 20. A summary of the main themes and categories constructed for this article is presented in Table 1.

For language editing and translation of citations into English, the research team used OpenAI's ChatGPT (GPT-5). All outputs were reviewed and validated for accuracy and alignment with scholarly standards.

TABLE 1 Summary of themes and categories.

Theme	Description	Categories
<i>Political significance of veganism</i>	Political meaning attributed to veganism, covering motivations for transition, conceptions of veganism, and individual consumption actions.	Political motivations for transitioning to veganism. Political descriptions of veganism. Description of individual vegan activism.
<i>Daily practices of vegan activism</i>	Everyday practices carried out by vegans to promote veganism at an interpersonal, microscale level.	Sharing information on social media. Cooking and showcasing vegan food to others. Conversations with others about veganism.
<i>Professional engagement as activism</i>	Activities to promote veganism in the professional space.	Activism in the health and nutrition domain. Activism in animal protection. Activism in vegan dietary alternatives.
<i>Practices and participation in collectives or organizations</i>	Ways of collective participation concerning veganism.	The need for a community in veganism. Participation in vegan organizations. Participation in generating and discussing Chilean laws and constitution.

3 Results

3.1 Beyond vegan consumption: the political sense of the everyday

For young adults, veganism extends far beyond dietary choice to become a form of everyday activism. Participants indicate that consumption is one of the initial forms of activism—used to challenge animal exploitation and promote sustainability—, but not the only or the main one. Ethical consumption also demands that activists acquire knowledge and craft persuasive arguments, navigating constant scrutiny and tension. Importantly, these practices ripple outward, reshaping the habits of family and friends. In this way, veganism operates as a micro-scale social movement, embedding political change in routine, daily behaviors.

3.1.1 Everyday ethical consumption

While participants cite diverse reasons for adopting veganism, the predominant motivations are ethical and political—ranging from animal and environmental concerns to a critique of exploitative market systems (Kalte, 2021; Janssen et al., 2016; Giraud, 2021). Accordingly, they view consumption as an initial—but not sole—activist tactic that extends their influence into immediate social circles. Ethical consumption compels vegans to acquire specialized knowledge and craft persuasive discourses, as they navigate tensions around plastic use, corporate practices, and broader systems of domination (Bertuzzi, 2017; Jallinoja et al., 2019; Yates, 2022). By refusing to purchase from companies linked to animal, environmental, or human exploitation, activists enact a market-based challenge that ripples outward, reshaping the consumption patterns of friends and family. Isidora, an established vegan, recounts her experience:

“This collective well-being is intertwined with numerous struggles that we need to integrate and walk through toward that horizon. Many times, you end up with veganism and it's like, “well, let's buy everything vegan they sell at the supermarket,” and it's like, “no! Look at the amount of plastic or what the supermarket represents as a company, as a transnational!”

Isidora's reflection highlights the reflexivity required in ethical consumption: activists must continually critique not only animal exploitation but also environmental and corporate dimensions. This dynamic positions everyday market choices as a foundational form of vegan activism that initiates broader social transformations. It echoes Bertuzzi (2017) and Jallinoja et al. (2019), who show that ethical purchasing can generate ripple effects in non-vegan networks. Having established consumption as a baseline tactic, we now turn to how activists translate their new identities into interpersonal influence.

3.1.2 Interpersonal influence and small-scale social change

Beyond personal dietary changes, adopting veganism creates new meanings that drive activists to align their social lives with their values (Giacoman et al., 2021, 2023). This coherence imperative often manifests in everyday interpersonal interactions. For example, Magdalena, a novice vegan, describes how, from her perspective,

being vegan itself constitutes a form of activism, not only due to changes in consumption but also due to the impact it generates in her family:

“Feel that people by being vegans are already engaging in some form of activism, even if they don't realize it (...) my dad no longer eats meat, my mother-in-law occasionally calls me for vegetable recipes, and the other day she explicitly told me “you have made a change in my whole family.”

Magdalena's account illustrates that vegan activism extends beyond intentional advocacy into an effective environmental influence through routine social practices. Hosting vegan meals compels her circle to explore plant-based cooking, diversifying their options and normalizing alternative diets. These examples confirm that interpersonal coherence—demonstrating one's values through daily life—serves as a potent mode of small-scale social transformation. While ethical consumption establishes the foundation, it is through these identity-based, relational practices that activists diffuse vegan norms into their broader social networks.

3.2 Cooking, communication and social media: an everyday activism

Vegan activism manifests in various forms, all emphasizing the importance of spreading veganism in daily interactions. Through food sharing, vegans aim to challenge the stigmas and prejudices associated with veganism, presenting culinary alternatives that demonstrate their economic viability and deliciousness (Giacoman and Joustra, 2025). However, it is also recognized that activism goes beyond promoting vegan food and should address speciesism as a whole. The diffusion strategies employed by vegans vary, ranging from more passive and positively oriented approaches to more direct and confrontational ones, depending on the context and the receptiveness of the other person. Additionally, social media has emerged as a space for activism, enabling the dissemination of vegan information, recipes, and perspectives. Ultimately, the daily interactions of vegan activism seek to raise awareness and interest in veganism, fostering broader social change towards an ethical and sustainable lifestyle. The transition to veganism and its maintenance involve attributing a political meaning to everyday actions (Véron, 2016). Although the literature has highlighted the private and individual nature of vegan activism (Kalte, 2021), these actions are directed towards social change through the dissemination of veganism in interpersonal relationships. Participants describe that their activism takes place in their daily lives, utilizing various daily interaction opportunities to promote veganism.

3.2.1 Cooking and commensality

Most of the participants emphasize that a fundamental aspect of vegan activism involves challenging the stigma associated with this lifestyle, such as beliefs that being vegan is difficult, expensive, nutritionally insufficient, and culinarily lacking in flavor (Twine, 2018). Cooking and shared meals emerge as potent sites of vegan activism, where food and conversation intersect to challenge these prevailing stigmas (Giacoman and Joustra, 2025). By preparing delicious and affordable dishes, activists like Jennifer—an established

vegan— challenge the belief that veganism is difficult, expensive, or nutritionally inadequate. She illustrates this in her daily practice:

“Regarding promoting veganism, I try to do it daily with vegetarians or people who eat meat. I attempt to explain things to them or ask them questions (...) I also try to cook, make hearty, tasty, and nutritious meals and tell them “look, this is vegan and very easy to make, and it’s not expensive,” promoting these things, ultimately reducing their non-vegan meals.”

Vegans face the challenge of maintaining their stance within friendships, workplaces, and even their own households, where veganism may not be widely shared. In this context, the simple act of sharing a meal can become a political act. Cooking and communal dining thus serve as platforms for raising awareness about broader ethical and political issues, such as animal exploitation, and represent key strategies in vegan activism (Giacoman et al., 2021, 2023). Marisol, an established vegan, uses these moments of conversation and shared meals to promote veganism and raise awareness:

“A lot happens around food, because sharing a meal with others is very common (...) it’s something I always end up talking about. When I offer something to eat or prepare something, people know it’s vegan and they’re surprised. They say things like “oh, this tastes so good,” “how did you make this?” and talking about this is super important: mentioning the positive and also explaining why it’s so important to me.”

Marisol views meal-time conversations as unavoidable opportunities for activism. By offering vegan dishes, she captures others’ interest—evident in comments on flavor and questions about preparation—and uses these moments to introduce political discussions. In doing so, food becomes a natural gateway to vegan discourse, which Marisol frames positively by emphasizing how plant-based ingredients prevent animal suffering. This approach contrasts with shock-based tactics, instead demonstrating veganism’s ethical benefits through everyday experience. Her example shows that food can act as a gateway to political discourse, making vegan messaging more accessible and positively received.

3.2.2 Communication as deliberative activism

Although sharing food often sparks activism and makes conversations inevitable, vegans also deliberately initiate discussions in other settings. In the absence of a “facilitator” like a shared meal, they have developed targeted communication strategies. For example, Nicolás—who has been vegan for 8 years—explains how he refined his approach by tailoring his message to each audience:

“I’m not going to point fingers at people who eat meat because ultimately you get the opposite effect (...) I’ve been refining that way of doing activism. For example, when I talked to women, or people who like make-up, I would explain that there is an app that provides all the information about vegan make-up; you can look it up there. I did it in a way that would be as easy as possible for the other person, sparking their interest to search and also motivating them.”

Rather than confrontational appeals that directly accuse non-vegans of contributing to animal exploitation, most interviewees

favor positive, audience-tailored dialogues that respect others’ interests and invite self-directed exploration. This deliberative style—adapting the message to the listener—fosters curiosity and reduces resistance, acknowledging that meaningful social change depends on the other party’s willingness to engage.

While most interviewees agree that sharing food with others is a form of activism, there are participants who believe that this may not be sufficient and might not be considered a complete form of activism (Spang, 2025). Denisse, a well-established vegan from an upper-class background, expresses this opinion by stating that focusing solely on promoting vegan food could “push to the background everything that speciesism deeply entails and how culture embeds it.” In this sense, the need for vegan activism to challenge speciesism “on a micro or macro scale” is emphasized. However, the importance of engaging with others regarding veganism as a fundamental part of vegan activism is also recognized.

3.2.3 Social media and activism

The approach to veganism through meals and everyday conversations also extends to social media. As previous studies have noted, one of the most significant aspects of vegan activist practice involves developing strategies for communication, education, and dissemination via social networks (Jallinoja et al., 2019; Bertuzzi, 2017; Giacoman et al., 2021). In relation to the promotion of vegan food, Valentina—a vegan of 7 months—emphasizes using her social media platforms to share vegan recipes, which she considers a personal form of activism:

“My Instagram is very focused on that, on veganism, and I upload my recipes... Many people ask me: “How can I cook this, but in a vegan way?” For me, it’s a form of activism, something I can contribute to because I really like cooking.”

On the other hand, regarding knowledge dissemination, Sebastián, a vegan for 17 years, mentions using his social media as a way to convey information and exercise his activism. He emphasizes that he has refined this practice through his studies in digital marketing.

“I use my Instagram to inform people about veganism. It’s always focused on that, so I took digital marketing courses. I try to tailor what I do and try to apply it, like doing activism. I’m also an activist; when you’re vegan, this need to inform people also arises.”

Valentina and Sebastián illustrate how sharing food recipes and information as forms of everyday activism also extends to social media through posts, stories, reels, and other formats. To do so effectively, they adopt communication strategies with a positive focus. Engaging with social media requires an understanding of audience reactions, strategies for remaining active and relevant on platforms, and the ability to avoid censorship (commonly referred to as “banning” or “shadow banning”) while creating content with broad reach. Accordingly, activists tend to prioritize sharing factual information, culinary alternatives, and content that fosters empathy toward animals. This approach stands in contrast to more aggressive or explicit forms of activism on social media, such as posting graphic videos of animal suffering or slaughter. In this respect, the fact that Chilean activists avoid such content marks a clear departure from the

historically dominant tactic of “moral shock” within the animal rights movement (Jasper and Poulsen, 1995; Munro, 2005).

3.3 Professional engagement as a form of vegan activism

Within the context of vegan activism, some participants emphasize that their professional engagements have become a means to promote veganism and drive broader social change. The lifestyle activism perspective posits that individual practices can be oriented towards collective social change (Haenfler et al., 2012). Participants highlight how their daily work becomes a relevant practice for spreading veganism. The professional domains identified by participants as activist spaces vary in terms of their reach and the specialized knowledge required to engage. Two types of domains stand out: those involving small vegan food businesses and health professionals offering guidance and knowledge about veganism. Furthermore, some cases illustrate how professional activism can extend beyond immediate circles, influencing institutional and economic social spaces.

3.3.1 Vegan food entrepreneurs

The first form of professional activism is associated with owners of small vegan food and catering businesses. A key skill in this type of activism is the ability to create dishes that are both visually appealing and flavorful, in order to attract the attention of non-vegans, particularly when shared on social media. This is exemplified by Carla, a novice vegan who transitioned 5 months ago and launched a vegan pastry business specializing in cakes and desserts, aiming to promote the consumption of vegan products among non-vegans:

“Engaging in activism through the kitchen can be a great niche (...). The idea is to somehow showcase that one can eat deliciously without causing harm to animals, which is the ideal.”

In the professional vegan food sphere, the strategic use of knowledge to refine cooking techniques, expand market offerings, and engage in activism through innovation is key. This approach led Magdalena to venture into the production of lab-grown meat. She identified the need for alternatives that closely mimic animal products in order to facilitate the transition to veganism. Magdalena, an established vegan, drew on the knowledge gained during her university studies and her professional experience as a business administrator to ensure the economic viability and sustainability of her venture:

“Last November, with two scientist friends, we started a project (on lab-grown meat). For me, it's related to veganism (...). There are accelerators that focus solely on biotechnology initiatives, some only on lab-grown meat. So, we're seeking funds in that direction.”

These cases confirm that vegan cultural entrepreneurs act as catalysts for broader social change. Unlike the examples of everyday activism discussed in previous sections, professional activism has a broader scope, reaching beyond the personal to engage a wider audience. By combining culinary appeal with technical innovation,

they transcend individual practice to reshape markets and public perceptions, an effect aligned with Gheihman's (2021) characterization of vegan entrepreneurs as key movement actors.

3.3.2 Vegan activism among healthcare professionals

A second type of connection between professional practice and vegan activism emerges in the realm of healthcare professionals. These individuals see their role as one of guidance, offering specialized knowledge to support the practice of healthy veganism. Their focus lies in helping other vegans maintain proper nutrition while educating those around them about the nutritional aspects of a vegan lifestyle. Isadora—an independent nutritionist—describes her work as debunking prejudices encountered during her studies and promoting plant-based diets through online consultations:

“I am currently trying to work independently as a nutritionist, offering online consultations mainly focused on the vegetarian and vegan population, promoting that lifestyle.”

Luis, a vegan for 6 years, is currently studying nutrition and considers his education a key resource for his activism. Through his studies, he has gained technical and specialized knowledge about veganism, which he intends to use to inform and educate future patients:

“My activism now centers on studying and educating others. The goal is to specialize—whether through clinical practice or other means—to better inform people.”

Both Isadora and Luis illustrate how nutrition professionals transform their technical knowledge into activist tools. By offering tailored guidance and educational resources, they not only support individual dietary transitions but also embed vegan norms within institutional and community settings.

3.3.3 Institutional vegan advocacy through NGOs and foundations

A third domain of professional vegan activism involves leadership roles in foundations and non-governmental organizations, where activists operate with greater institutionalization and social reach. Success in this arena requires advanced professional expertise—including legal and regulatory knowledge of the meat industry—and strong interpersonal skills to engage stakeholders at the highest levels.

Pilar, a vegan for nine-month, exemplifies this form of activism. She draws on her technical understanding of Chile's Agricultural and Livestock Service—covering livestock classification, meat nomenclature, traceability systems, and slaughterhouse regulations—to conduct transparency audits and policy discussions with agency directors:

“For a while, we were overseeing the Agricultural and Livestock Service in slaughterhouses, requesting all records for transparency and then discussing them with the Director.”

Through such institutional channels, activists like Pilar extend vegan advocacy beyond individual and community spheres into national policy and regulatory frameworks. Their professionalization

grants vegan activism greater legitimacy and amplifies its impact at multiple governance levels.

By means of the mentioned examples, we can observe that these vegans aim to have an individual impact on a broader scale beyond their immediate surroundings. This manifests at various levels, whether locally, through entrepreneurs and healthcare professionals, as well as nationally. In this sense, the professionalization of these activities becomes a crucial tool to conduct activism on a larger scale, with greater support and social legitimacy.

3.4 From individual activism to collective involvement

The formation of vegan communities and engagement in activist organizations and foundations are concrete manifestations of collective vegan activism. These groups aim to overcome the challenges and difficulties of veganism by creating spaces of support and sharing objectives and action strategies. In addition to raising awareness about the animal industry and promoting veganism, these organizations seek to influence public policies and public opinion at large. Thus, vegan activism emerges as a social movement with a political agenda striving for societal change on a broader scale.

3.4.1 Being part of a community

For a significant proportion of the interviewees, community building is a fundamental pillar in vegan activism, as it allows for the creation of support networks and teamwork to share information and experiences. This strengthens the solidarity and motivation necessary to persevere in activism. These communities can help overcome the challenges and difficulties that individuals often face when attempting to adopt a vegan lifestyle. In this sense, daily vegan activism can generate a kind of “grassroots movement” that transcends individual efforts and becomes a collective endeavor. Elías illustrates this dynamic with his experience:

“There is an activism and a community in themselves that share reflections and experiences. This also has a strong political component... It's about sharing these experiences with other individuals through various means so that it's not individual suffering, but collective, and this is one of the most political things you can do.”

Elías links the realization that suffering is not experienced in isolation with political action. This connection encompasses not only the practical challenges of veganism but also the persistent lack of understanding within close circles, such as family or colleagues. Consequently, vegan communities often form to share experiences and provide mutual support among individuals with similar values and struggles. This need for community reflects the political significance of everyday life, generating tensions with those who hold different lifestyles and political views. Such dynamics highlight how personal existence in private spaces becomes political, fostering collective action and solidarity within activist communities (Portwood-Stacer, 2013).

However, it is important to note that, just like in any social movement, there are different currents within vegan activism, with welfarism and abolitionism being two main approaches that differ in

their vision. Consuelo, an established vegan, shares her experience, mentioning that in her work, she aligns more with welfarism by considering the use of cruelty-free animal products as a possible alternative when pursuing social change:

“We dedicate a lot of effort to animal welfare. It's complex how abolitionists perceive us and if they will oppose us. They see us as potential adversaries in the animal protection process.”

Consuelo highlights the tensions between abolitionist and welfarist currents within vegan activism. She explains that, although both camps oppose animal exploitation, abolitionists demand the complete end of all animal use, viewing any continued consumption—even of “cruelty-free” products—as perpetuating animals’ status as commodities. Welfarists, by contrast, advocate for pragmatic reforms that improve animals’ living conditions within existing systems. Consuelo observes that this ideological split mirrors debates in other social movements and enriches vegan activism by offering multiple pathways to the shared goal of reducing animal suffering.

3.4.2 Marches in vegan activism

Marches have become a traditional action within social movements due to their ability to raise awareness about causes and mobilize people. Moreover, marches often serve as spaces for participants to come together, fostering a sense of community and belonging within the movement (Véron, 2016). By joining a march, activists find a way to collectively express their support and commitment, contributing to an environment of empowerment and motivation. In Chile, while vegan movements might not stage strikes or stoppages that have a similar impact to those by labor or student movements (Torres, 2022), some interviewees mention that various organizations have coordinated marches across different cities in the country. In the specific case of vegan activism, marches have become an effective tool to raise awareness about animal rights and promote a vegan lifestyle (Munro, 2005). Martina, who has been a novice vegan for 7 months, shares her experience:

“Marches enable the enactment of dramatizations, individuals carrying signs, and direct activists. The latter are tasked with informing others about the essence of the intervention, with the ultimate purpose of raising awareness about veganism and its principles.”

Martina’s account underscores how marches transform public spaces into arenas of persuasion, blending spectacle with educational outreach to embed vegan messages in the collective consciousness. By taking to the streets, participants aim to create a visual and emotional impact (Giacoman and Torres, 2022), appealing to the collective consciousness and encouraging reflection on the consumption of animal products and the associated ethical and environmental consequences.

3.4.3 Activism through organizations

Activism through organizations plays a fundamental role in promoting veganism and animal protection. These organizations not only organize campaigns, events, and educational programs, but also actively work to influence public policy and shape public opinion. In Chile, this was exemplified during the drafting process of a new

constitution in 2022—a process characterized by significant engagement from young people and environmental groups (Torres et al., 2022). This institutional involvement provided a platform for vegan and environmental organizations to influence the very framework of Chile's legal order through formal political mechanisms.

As a result of the mass social protests that broke out in October 2019 (Giacoman and Torres, 2022), the Chilean government initiated a constitutional reform process aimed at addressing widespread public discontent. Between 2020 and 2023, the country underwent two constitutional drafting processes, both of which ultimately failed to obtain the public approval required in national referendums. The first of these processes was particularly notable for the mechanisms it introduced to encourage broad citizen participation in proposing articles and provisions for inclusion in the draft Constitution (Soto Barrientos et al., 2025). Within this framework, environmental issues emerged as a central focus of debate. Proposals such as recognizing nature as a subject of rights, guaranteeing the right to access water, and enshrining animal protection in the Constitution were actively promoted by environmental and vegan organizations and were successfully incorporated into the first draft of the new Constitution (Torres et al., 2022).

During this period, vegan activism played a significant role, spearheading initiatives such as organizing campaigns to gather the more than 15,000 signatures required for citizen-led proposals and producing the technical reports that substantiated them. For example, the citizen-led proposal “Subjects, Not Objects” sought the constitutional recognition of the interests and rights of non-human animals (Acosta and Lebleblici, 2021). Activists also engaged in advocacy and lobbying efforts to ensure the advancement of these initiatives within the Constitutional Convention tasked with drafting the new Constitution. In this regard, notable meetings took place between vegan organizations and members of the Constitutional Convention—elected representatives responsible for drafting the new Constitution—as well as with the President of the Constitutional Convention, the principal authority overseeing the process. Raúl, a vegan and member of an environmental foundation, recounts his contributions:

“From the outset, I was fully involved in exploring how I could influence the new constitution. I was also part of an environmental-focused foundation, where we developed an extensive document outlining 18 environmental guidelines for an ecological constitution.”

In Raúl's experience, his organization drafted guidelines for an ecological constitution and formally submitted them to the body responsible for the new constitutional text. Through this initiative, vegan activism aimed to shape the constitution by embedding environmental protection and animal-rights principles. This example illustrates how vegan organizations leverage institutional channels to influence legislation. Such political and legal advocacy extends vegan activism beyond individual and community practices, reframing veganism as a fully realized social movement rather than solely a lifestyle choice.

4 Discussion

In this research, we have explored the actions and practices that young adult vegans in Santiago, Chile, perceive as expressions of their

activism. To achieve this, interviews were conducted with 40 vegans from various social classes and with different periods of veganism adoption. The findings reveal a range of political actions aimed at social change, varying in scope: from daily actions representing activism in everyday life to participation in organizations seeking to impact the public sphere.

4.1 Theoretical contributions

From a theoretical perspective, this research enriches the conceptualization of vegan activism through three core contributions. First, we reconceptualize vegan activism as simultaneously a lifestyle movement and a social movement, thus bridging private routines with collective mobilizations. Second, we introduce a typology that classifies activist practices along two intersecting axes: individual versus collective action, and interpersonal versus public impact. Third, we uncover underexplored domains—culinary-based interventions and professional engagement—that extend current theories of everyday political participation.

Our findings support the idea that veganism can be understood simultaneously as a lifestyle movement and a social movement (Gheihman, 2021; Fernandes-Jesus et al., 2018; Bertuzzi, 2017; Turgay, 2020). As a lifestyle movement, vegan activism enacts cultural change through everyday individual actions in close-knit social circles. At the same time, it displays classic social-movement traits: public demonstrations, interventions in shared spaces (Véron, 2016), and institutional advocacy aimed at broad policy reform (Kalte, 2021; Bertuzzi, 2017). Integrating these perspectives reveals that personal, private practices and organized collective efforts are not mutually exclusive but mutually reinforcing. In practice, vegans deploy individual routines to reshape production systems and animal-protection policies, while collective mobilizations sustain momentum toward large-scale social change. Thus, veganism spans both microsocial and macrosocial levels of action, charting a course toward an overarching horizon of societal transformation.

In this sense, we propose an analytical typology that identifies and classifies vegan activist practices according to two intersecting dimensions: the level of action (individual or collective) and the orientation of impact (towards close social circles or broader public influence). This framework captures the diversity of everyday activism by distinguishing between practices such as ethical consumption and watching documentaries—located at the individual level with impact oriented toward personal or immediate social transformation—and more outward-facing activities such as professional engagement or content creation on social media. At the collective level, the framework includes both relational actions such as cooking and commensality with close social ties, including family, friends, or colleagues, and public-oriented initiatives such as participating in NGOs, lobbying institutions, or attending demonstrations. By mapping activist practices along these two axes, the study offers a more nuanced understanding of how veganism is mobilized politically, showing that everyday actions and formal activism are not mutually exclusive but operate in dynamic interplay. This contribution enriches the literature on lifestyle activism and political participation by bridging micro-level practices with broader processes of social change (see Table 2).

In summary, our findings show that everyday behaviors—such as living openly as a vegan, answering questions, sharing information,

TABLE 2 Typology of vegan activist actions and practices.

Impact orientation	Individual level	Collective level
Orientation towards individual or social impact at a closer circle	Ethical consumption. Watch documentary.	Cooking and commensality. Talk to friends/family.
Orientation towards social or public impact	Content creation and sharing information on social media. Professional engagement.	Lobbying public institutions/authorities. Participation in foundations and NGOs. Marches and demonstrations.

and dispelling myths (e.g., that vegan food is expensive, nutritionally deficient, or bland)—are perceived by activists themselves as legitimate forms of political engagement. These quotidian practices take place both face-to-face and online, and they function alongside more conventional modes of activism—such as NGO-led legal advocacy, organized marches, and policy lobbying—creating a dynamic interplay between private, everyday actions and public, collective efforts. In this sense, our fieldwork indicates that vegan activism is underpinned by a discourse that politicizes everyday behaviors (consumption, cooking, and information sharing) imbuing them with collective meaning. These microsocial effects manifest as shifts in behavior among activists and their close networks (family, friends or colleagues). At the same time, participants' own descriptions reveal two main categories: those that focus on achieving a microsocial impact, such as ethical consumption, seeking information, or watching documentaries, among others; and those that aim for impact on broader levels, including meso and macrosocial oriented actions like posting about veganism on social media, participating in vegan marches, and lobbying authorities or participating in protests.

Although our findings align with prior work (Gheihman, 2021; Vestergren and Uysal, 2022), their principal value lies in centering vegans' own perspectives and revealing aspects of activism that extend far beyond ethical consumption, a theme that has long prevailed in the literature. We show that, for these activists, self-defined practices serve both as a lifestyle movement and as a social movement (Haenfler et al., 2012; Cherry, 2015). Everyday practices—such as cooking, commensality, and digital outreach—serve as a bridge between micro-level lifestyle theories and macro-level social movement frameworks (Véron, 2016). Importantly, these individual and microsocial interactions can scale up into broader collective mobilizations, producing tangible impacts in the public sphere.

It is noteworthy that many of the practices we observed—such as ethical consumption and social media advocacy—echo those documented in prior research (Kalte, 2021; Judge et al., 2022; Thomas et al., 2019; Bertuzzi, 2017). However, two domains emerged from our interviews that remain underexplored in the literature. First, cooking and commensality appear as pivotal activist tools, leveraging shared meals to catalyze microsocial change. Second, professional engagement functions as a distinct form of activism, whereby practitioners use their specialized expertise to enact mesosocial and institutional interventions. By empirically identifying these two

less-studied practices, our work expands the understanding of how vegans mobilize everyday interactions toward both small- and medium-scale social transformations.

In line with the previously discussed points, the results of this study also underscore that the definition of vegan activism and its forms of action are inherently shaped by participants' perceptions of the meaning of the veganism they practice. Those who see veganism primarily as an individual lifestyle focus on personal tactics—ethical consumption and sharing meals—to advance social change. Conversely, participants who view veganism as both a lifestyle and a collective social movement acknowledge the value of individual practices but argue they must be complemented by actions that target broader societal and public spheres.

Although veganism is frequently characterized as a lifestyle or ethical consumption movement, our participants reinterpret even their moral purchasing as activism, guided by what they term their “theory of social change.” They contend that ethical consumption becomes impactful not as an isolated decision but through its interactional, microsocial effects on peers and family. This perspective pushes the boundaries of “activism” to include both individual and collective dimensions, spanning immediate social circles and the broader public. By doing so, it offers a more nuanced conceptualization of vegan activism as inherently dual, rooted in personal practices yet oriented toward wider social transformation.

4.2 Practical implications

Our findings not only advance theoretical understanding but also yield several actionable insights for vegan and environmental activists to better understand effective practices. First, vegan activists can leverage communal meals and cooking demonstrations as low-barrier entry points for engaging non-vegans, using taste and affordability to counter common stigmas. Second, vegan digital campaigners should adopt positive, audience-tailored messaging—highlighting relatable narratives and practical tips—to build curiosity and minimize backlash. Third, vegan and environmental NGOs and advocacy groups can integrate everyday lifestyle tactics (e.g., recipe sharing, identity-based framing) alongside traditional mobilizations to create hybrid campaigns that resonate across personal and public spheres.

4.3 Study limitations

These findings must be interpreted in light of several inherent limitations. First, our reliance on voluntary, self-selected participants may have introduced a bias toward those comfortable discussing their activism, potentially underrepresenting individuals engaged in more contentious or illegal tactics, such as direct interventions in slaughterhouses (Munro, 2005). Second, as a qualitative, abductive case study focused on young vegans in a single metropolitan context, our results may not readily generalize to other age groups, cultural settings, or national populations. It is likely that motivations, definitions of activism, and everyday practices differ among older cohorts, rural communities, and other non-Western or developing-country contexts. By acknowledging these constraints, we aim to situate our contributions within their proper empirical boundaries

and to encourage future comparative research that explores vegan activism across diverse demographics and geopolitical environments.

4.4 Future research directions

Building on the insights generated by this study and acknowledging its empirical scope, several avenues for future research emerge. Collectively, these directions can contribute to assessing the prevalence of various forms of activism and examining the interplay between micro- and macrosocial strategies across diverse populations and thereby extend the analytical reach of current frameworks on lifestyle-based political participation.

First, comparative studies could explore how vegan activism manifests across different age groups, rural communities, and non-Western or Global South contexts. Such research would deepen our understanding of how cultural, generational, and socioeconomic factors shape the meanings and expressions of everyday activism, addressing the limitations of our urban, youth-focused sample. Second, longitudinal designs would be particularly valuable to trace how activist trajectories evolve over time, from initial lifestyle adoption to more sustained or institutionalized forms of engagement. These studies could illuminate the dynamic and developmental aspects of activism, offering a temporal complement to our typology of practices.

Third, future research could draw on secondary sources, including media coverage, NGO reports, and digital trace data, to track the public visibility, representation, and evolution of vegan activism. This would allow for a broader, context-sensitive analysis of how activist practices are framed, contested, or mainstreamed in different sociopolitical environments. Finally, comparative analyses with related lifestyle movements, such as Straight Edge, zero-waste, or slow-food initiatives, could clarify which elements of vegan activism are unique and which reflect broader patterns of lifestyle-based political participation. These comparisons would further refine theories of lifestyle movements by distinguishing context-specific tactics from more generalizable activist logics.

These future research directions not only advance theoretical debates about the nature of activism and lifestyle movements, but also support practitioners and organizations aiming to understand how everyday practices can foster long-term social change.

5 Conclusion

This study examined how young vegans in Santiago, Chile, conceptualize and enact activism in their everyday lives. We found that veganism functions simultaneously as a lifestyle movement, expressed through daily practices like cooking, consumption, digital content creation, and professional engagement, and as a social movement, involving public mobilization and formal political arenas. In doing so, our study addresses key gaps in the literature by shifting the analytical lens from predefined notions of activism to meanings grounded in activists' own experiences and self-definitions.

In sum, we offer three core contributions to the literature on activism and political participation. First, we develop a typology that identifies vegan activist practices along the axes of individual versus

collective action and interpersonal versus public impact. This framework reveals how practices often dismissed as “private”—such as commensality or professional engagement—hold political significance within activist imaginaries. Second, we provide an empirically grounded account of vegan activism by uncovering underexplored domains such as culinary-based interventions and workplace advocacy. These findings expand existing theories of political participation and social movement theory, showing how the boundaries of activism extend into domains of everyday and professional life that have traditionally been considered apolitical. Third, by adopting a qualitative, abductive approach centered on activists' own definitions, the study reframes activism as a flexible, dynamic, and situated category of practice, one that blurs boundaries between private and public, individual and collective, routine and strategic.

Together, these contributions challenge dominant frameworks that reduce vegan activism to ethical consumption, and instead illuminate its diverse manifestations as a driver of social change. More broadly, the study demonstrates how lifestyle movements can influence political culture, expand the repertoire of contentious and everyday politics, and contribute to democratic innovation by politicizing ordinary practices. By linking everyday practices to mechanisms of policy influence, public deliberation, and institutional engagement, the study underscores the political significance of vegan activism and advances debates in political participation and social movement theory. Our findings provide both theoretical contributions and practical guidance for scholars, activists, advocacy organizations, and policymakers—highlighting strategies such as workplace advocacy, culinary outreach, and digital campaigning that can leverage everyday practices to promote environmental and animal-welfare objectives.

Data availability statement

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available because they contain participants' personal information. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to CG, cgiacoma@uc.cl.

Ethics statement

The studies involving humans were approved by the Ethics Committee of Social Sciences of Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (protocol code 190610025, 03/04/2020). The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

RT: Conceptualization, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Methodology, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. CJ: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Methodology, Software, Writing – original draft. JF: Data curation, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft. CG: Writing – review & editing, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Supervision.

Funding

The author(s) declare that financial support was received for the research and/or publication of this article. This research was funded by the Chilean National Agency for Research and Development (ANID) through the FONDECYT program [grant numbers 11231130 and 1201629].

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to the Chilean vegan participants who shared their life stories and provided invaluable information. We also thank all the reviewers of this article for generously providing thorough and helpful comments.

References

- Acosta, G., and Leblebici, R. (2021). *Sujetos, no objetos. Propuesta para la inclusión de los animales no humanos en la Constitución de Chile*. Available online at: <https://www.chileconvencion.cl/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/IPC-19-5.pdf> (accessed August 07, 2025).
- Bertaux, D. (2011). El enfoque biográfico: su validez metodológica, sus potencialidades. *Acta Sociol.* 1, 61–93. doi: 10.22201/fcpys.24484938e.2011.56.29458
- Bertuzzi, N. (2017). Veganism: lifestyle or political movement? Looking for relations beyond Antispeciesism. *Relations* 5, 125–144. doi: 10.7358/rela-2017-002-ber1
- Büchs, M., Saunders, C., Wallbridge, R., Smith, G., and Bardsley, N. (2015). Identifying and explaining framing strategies of low carbon lifestyle movement organisations. *Glob. Environ. Change* 35, 307–315. doi: 10.1016/j.gloenvcha.2015.09.009
- Cherry, E. (2015). I was a teenage vegan: motivation and maintenance of lifestyle movements. *Sociol. Inquiry* 85, 55–74. doi: 10.1111/soin.12061
- Cherry, E. (2021). “Vegan studies in sociology” in *The Routledge handbook of vegan studies*. ed. L. Wright (New York: Routledge), 150–160.
- Cisáň, O. (2015). “Social movements in political science” in *The Oxford handbook of social movements*. eds. D. della Porta and M. Diani (Oxford: Oxford Academic), 50–67.
- Cornejo, M. (2006). El enfoque biográfico: Trayectorias, desarrollos teóricos y perspectivas. *Psykhe* 15, 95–106. doi: 10.4067/S0718-22282006000100008
- Della Porta, D., and Diani, M. (2020). *Social movements. An introduction*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Díaz Carmona, E. (2012). Perfil del vegano/a activista de liberación animal en España. *Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas (REIS)* 139, 175–187. doi: 10.5477/cis/reis.139.175
- Dobernig, K., and Stagl, S. (2015). Growing a lifestyle movement? Exploring identity-work and lifestyle politics in urban food cultivation. *Int. J. Consum. Stud.* 39, 452–458. doi: 10.1111/ijcs.12222
- Fernandes-Jesus, M., Lima, M. L., and Sabucedo, J.-M. (2018). Changing identities to change the world: identity motives in lifestyle politics and its link to collective action. *Polit. Psychol.* 39, 1031–1047. doi: 10.1111/pops.12473
- Gheihman, N. (2021). Veganism as a lifestyle movement. *Sociol. Compass* 15:e12877. doi: 10.1111/soc4.12877
- Giacoman, C., Alfaro, J., Aguilera Bornand, I. M., and Torres, R. (2021). Becoming vegan: a study of career and habitus. *Soc. Sci. Inf.* 60, 560–582. doi: 10.1177/05390184211049933
- Giacoman, C., and Joustra, C. (2025). The way to someone’s mind is through their stomach: vegans and culinary activism. *Sociology*. doi: 10.1177/00380385251357529
- Giacoman, C., Joustra, C., Del Río, F., and Aguilera Bornand, I. M. (2023). Reflexivity in vegan eating practices: a qualitative study in Santiago, Chile. *Sustainability* 15:2074. doi: 10.3390/su15032074
- Giacoman, C., and Torres, R. (2022). Dance to resist: emotions and protest in Lindy hop dancers during October 2019 Chilean rallies. *Can. J. Lat. Am. Caribb. Stud.* 47, 46–66. doi: 10.1080/08263663.2022.1996696
- Gibbs, G. (2007). *Analyzing Qualitative Data*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Giraud, E. (2021). *Veganism: Politics, practice and theory*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Giroux, V., and Larue, R. (2019). *Le véganisme*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Goldthorpe, J. H., and McKnight, A. (2004). *The economic basis of social class, CASE paper, N° 80*. London: Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Publisher’s note

All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

- Hanfler, R., Johnson, B., and Jones, E. (2012). Lifestyle movements: exploring the intersection of lifestyle and social movements. *Soc. Mov. Stud.* 11, 1–20. doi: 10.1080/14742837.2012.640535
- Handayani, B., Filimonau, V., and Ermolaev, V. A. (2025). Ethical veganism as the future of tourist consumption. *Int. J. Hosp. Tour. Adm.* 26, 1–34. doi: 10.1080/15256480.2025.2494576
- Herman, A., and O’Neill, K. (2025). The geographies of veganism: exploring the complex entanglements of places, plants, peoples, and profits through vegan food practices. *Prog. Environ. Geogr.* 4, 92–112. doi: 10.1177/27539687241307954
- Jallinoja, P., Vinnari, M., and Niva, M. (2019). “Veganism and plant-based eating: analysis of interplay between discursive strategies and lifestyle political consumerism” in *The Oxford handbook of political consumerism*. eds. M. Boström, M. Micheletti and P. Oosterveer (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 157–180.
- Janssen, M., Busch, C., Rödiger, M., and Hamm, U. (2016). Motives of consumers following a vegan diet and their attitudes towards animal agriculture. *Appetite*, 105, 643–651. doi: 10.1016/j.appet.2016.06.039
- Jasper, J. M., and Poulsen, J. D. (1995). Recruiting strangers and friends: moral shocks and social networks in animal rights and antinuclear protests. *Soc. Probl.* 42, 493–512. doi: 10.2307/3097043
- Judge, M., Fernando, J. W., and Begeny, C. T. (2022). Dietary behaviour as a form of collective action: a social identity model of vegan activism. *Appetite* 168, 1–11. doi: 10.1016/j.appet.2021.105730
- Kalte, D. (2021). Political veganism: an empirical analysis of vegans’ motives, aims, and political engagement. *Polit. Stud.* 69, 814–833. doi: 10.1177/0032321720930179
- Larsson, C. L., Rönnlund, U., Johansson, G., and Dahlgren, L. (2003). Veganism as status passage: the process of becoming a vegan among youths in Sweden. *Appetite* 41, 61–67. doi: 10.1016/S0195-6663(03)00045-X
- Lorenzini, J., and Forno, F. (2022). Political consumerism and lifestyle activism. In M. Giugni and M. Grasso (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of political participation* (417–434). Oxford Academic. Available online at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198861126.013.25>.
- Maguire, M., and Delahunt, B. (2017). Doing a thematic analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars. *All Ireland Journal of Higher Education*, 9. Available at: <http://ojs.aishc.org/index.php/aishc-j/article/view/335>
- Moor, J. (2017). Lifestyle politics and the concept of political participation. *Acta Polit.* 52, 179–197. doi: 10.1057/ap.2015.27
- Moor, J., and Verhaegen, S. (2020). Gateway or getaway? Testing the link between lifestyle politics and other modes of political participation. *Eur. Polit. Sci. Rev.* 12, 91–111. doi: 10.1017/S1755773919000377
- Munro, L. (2005). Strategies, action repertoires and DIY activism in the animal rights movement. *Soc. Mov. Stud.* 4, 75–94. doi: 10.1080/14742830500051994
- Neveu, É. (2019). *Sociologie des mouvements sociaux*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Portwood-Stacer, L. (2013). *Lifestyle politics and radical activism*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Radnitz, C., Beezhold, B., and DiMatteo, J. (2015). Investigation of lifestyle choices of individuals following a vegan diet for health and ethical reasons. *Appetite* 90, 31–36. doi: 10.1016/j.appet.2015.02.026
- Riley, S., Griffin, C., and Morey, Y. (2010). The case for ‘everyday politics’: evaluating neo-tribal theory as way to understand alternative forms of political participation, using

- electronic dance music culture as an example. *Sociology* 4, 345–363. doi: 10.1177/0038038509357206
- Ruby, M. B. (2012). Vegetarianism. A blossoming field of study. *Appetite* 58, 141–150. doi: 10.1016/j.appet.2011.09.019
- Simmons, J. (2018). ‘Not that kind of atheist’: Scepticism as a lifestyle movement. *Soc. Mov. Stud.* 17, 437–450. doi: 10.1080/14742837.2018.1434500
- Soto Barrientos, F., Suárez, O., and Alemparte, B. (2025). The citizen initiative in Chile’s constitution-making (2021–2023): lessons from a participatory and digital mechanism in comparative perspective. *Glob. Const.*, 1–29. doi: 10.1017/S2045381725100038
- Spang, F. (2025). Tailoring to the audience? On the potential harms of message framing in vegan activism. *J. Agric. Environ. Ethics* 38:6. doi: 10.1007/s10806-024-09941-1
- Spiteri, L. (2021). Zero-waste Instagram communities: a thematic analysis of ZW activities through the lens of the lifestyle movement framework. *Can. J. Inf. Libr. Sci.* 43, 245–268.
- Thomas, E. F., Bury, S. M., Louis, W. R., Amiot, C. E., Molenberghs, P., Crane, M. F., et al. (2019). Vegetarian, vegan, activist, radical: using latent profile analysis to examine different forms of support for animal welfare. *Group Process. Intergroup Relat.* 22, 836–857. doi: 10.1177/1368430218824407
- Tilly, C., and Tarrow, S. (2015). *Contentious politics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Torres, R. (2022). Neoliberalism and the impact of student demonstrations in Chile: pushing the bounds of the post-Pinochet education project? *Lat. Am. Perspect.* 49, 146–161. doi: 10.1177/0094582X221082985
- Torres, R., Elgueta, E. R., Peña, J. C., de Ferari, F., and Hormazábal, G. A. (2022). Jóvenes, derechos y sociedad: perspectivas constituyentes juveniles y su representación en la propuesta de nueva Constitución en Chile. *Rev. Temas Sociol.* 31, 45–77. doi: 10.29344/07196458.31.3330
- Turgay, T. (2020). *Framing the everyday resistance in vegan lifestyle [master’s thesis]*. Ankara: Middle East Technical University.
- Twine, R. (2018). Materially constituting a sustainable food transition: the case of vegan eating practice. *Sociology* 52, 166–181. doi: 10.1177/0038038517726647
- Véron, O. (2016). (extra)ordinary activism: veganism and the shaping of hemeratomias. *Int. J. Sociol. Soc. Policy* 36, 756–773. doi: 10.1108/IJSSP-12-2015-0137
- Véron, O. (2025). Vegan geographies: negotiations, contestations, and encounters in the everyday spaces of veganism. *Ann. Am. Assoc. Geogr.* 115, 969–987. doi: 10.1080/24694452.2025.2461764
- Vestergren, S., and Uysal, M. S. (2022). Beyond the choice of what you put in your mouth: a systematic mapping review of veganism and vegan identity. *Front. Psychol.* 13:848434. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.848434
- Wright, L. (2021). “Framing vegan studies. Vegetarianism, veganism, animal studies, ecofeminism” in *The Routledge handbook of vegan studies*. ed. L. Wrhight (New York: Routledge), 3–14.
- Yates, L. (2022). How everyday life matters: everyday politics, everyday consumption and social change. *Consum. Soc.* 1, 144–169. doi: 10.1332/MBPU6295